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AUTHOR Rogers, Sue F.
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ABSTRACT

Seven years of changes in a Practicum in Reading course has altered the responsibilities and accountabilities for preservice teachers tutoring in a public school. Changes, formative and summative assessment results for tutored children and implications for the program's future are discussed. A study examined whether the college literacy practicum tutors were doing the quality work needed to be held accountable for their tutee's academic progress. Results indicate: (1) tutees improved in expository writing, oral reading assessments, recognition of initial consonants, spelling phonetically, and spelling with silent letters; (2) tutors used the state's criteria of standards when designing and teaching lessons for tutees; (3) tutors received continuous support from supervisors; and (4) tutors received positive results on their teaching by keeping a portfolio of tutees' products from tutoring. (RS)

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CHANGES IN READING PRACTICUM ACCOUNTABILITY: PRESERVICE TEACHERS ARE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR CHILDREN'S PROGRESS

By

Sue F. Rogers, Ed.D.
Professor Education
Education Department
420 West Main Street
Averett College
Danville, Virginia 24541

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S. F. Rogers

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Seven years of changes in a Practicum in Reading course has altered the responsibilities and accountabilities for preservice teachers tutoring in a public school. Changes, formative and summative assessment results for tutored children and implications for the program's future will be discussed.

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BY
SUE F. ROGERS, ED.D.
AVERETT COLLEGE

Dynamic is the term that comes to mind when describing our college's teacher education program throughout the 1990s as preservice teachers prepare for careers in the 21st century. Their programs have changed to fit into the college's more streamlined budget requirements, as well as to meet local school systems' needs of an increasing at-risk population. Also, the program strives to include trends in instructional practices recommended by learned societies and always, to meet the stringent state department of education competencies for new teachers which are ever increasing so the state department's standards for children's classroom achievement can be met.

The college program

Early in the 1990s the college, faced with the possibility of a significant financial outlay for building renovations and updating computer and other equipment to a twenty-year old reading center used by tutors in reading practicums, decided to close the center after research indicated the field placements in a local public school led to positive learning experiences for practicum tutors (Rogers, 1991). Afterwards, reading practicum tutors were placed in a local elementary school where tutoring has revolved around a student pullout program since 1991. This program began with the teachers and instructor working together with the tutors to help and encourage the tutors to become confident teachers when experimenting with assessments and new instructional strategies learned in their teacher education classes. More recently, the state department of education has written literacy competencies (Division, 1998) for teacher education programs to require preservice teachers to demonstrate knowledge in instructional ablilities of skills. Thus, more supervision and conferences of practicum tutors by the course instructor are needed to insure preservice teacher competency.

The school and children

However, at-risk students, catorized by percentage of students on free lunch, have been increasing in numbers at the assigned for practicum placement schools-from 50% in spring 1997, 57% in spring 1998 and 67% in spring 1999 (personal conversation with principal, June 21, 1999). In addition, the local public schools have become inclusion schools and are struggling with the stringent new state department of education standards for student achievement. State criterion reference tests are given to third and fifth grade students yearly to determine student achievement of set standards with the school's future state accreditation resting on the student test results (Board, 1995). Thus, there is much pressure on teachers and students to achieve high performance in literacy skills. With more instructional needs to satisfy in class teachers have needed the reading

practicum tutors to work closely with at-risk children on a variety of literacy skills and motivation when instructing and reinforcing skills learned during classroom instruction.

The problem

The new state standards (Board, 1995) for student performance increased teachers needs for students to perform at a higher academic level to show achievement of state standards. This need, coupled with the assigned school's logistic problems of an increasing at-risk student population and inclusion classes, teachers and students are more pressured to accomplish academically. Thus, our college's literacy practicum tutors are assigned tutees with many academic needs. Due to the number of skills tutors are to assess and instruct for assigned tutees and to the heavy demand already placed on the classroom teacher, the tutor's instruction must be very specific covering state standards. The implemented solution was for the classroom teacher, the course instructor and each tutor to work cooperatively and frequently for the tutees' optimal benefit. Where was the time to do this and what was going to happen to the tutor who after all, is a preservice teacher who is just taking first steps to apply newly learned instructional strategies and is not the expert that the job called for? Where was the preservice teacher going to get the encouragement deserved and time for trial and error experiments?

Another problem presenting itself for teacher education programs in colleges and universities throughout the state—public school personnel were expressing concerns about hosting preservice teachers in field placements among fears of lost instructional time spent with a preservice teacher in a learning situation when inservice teachers could use that time for on-task instruction (personal communication, with public school personnel, Spring, 1998). Since principals call instructors in our college's teacher education program throughout the year requesting field placements, placement had not been a problem. But, to ensure that our program continued to have available good field placements, it was essential that our preservice teachers be held accountable for the knowledge gained by children under their tutorage. Were the college's literacy practicum tutors doing the quality of work needed to be held accountable for their tutee's academic progress? A plan was formed to gather data on their tutoring experience (including assessment) for evaluation of their accountability.

The tutoring experience

During the fall semester (1998) 20 preservice teachers enrolled in the literacy practicum tutoring course and were assigned 18 second graders and two fifth graders to tutor. When meeting with the tutees' classroom teachers and the school's principal in the school's media center teachers discussed each tutee with the tutor and planned for conferences throughout the semester. The tutors then began their tutoring for 21 contact hours divided over seven weeks with one hour each morning three days weekly. For tutoring, each child's tutor walked with the child from the classroom and returned afterwards with personal conversations taking place to and from tutoring in the school's cafeteria. This was the only time for personal conversation between the two throughout the tutor-tutee contact time. The tutoring hour did not begin until formal instruction commenced when the two were seated at their cafeteria table.

The first week was for assessment as not any of the tutees had been in the college's tutoring program prior to that date. The same assessments were readministered during the seventh week of tutoring to assess progress. The pre-tutoring and post-tutoring results are given in Table 1 for oral and silent reading , Table 2 for phonics and Table 3 for spelling when assessing with the Bader Reading and Language Inventory (Bader, 1998). Table 4 shows results for expository written expression as measured by the tutors' informal assessment which was used during daily instruction by both tutor and child for assessing daily written work.

Tutor instruction

Throughout the five weeks of tutoring, the tutors each followed the same lesson sequence. The hour was divided according to the following:

30 minutes—written expression
10 minutes—spelling analysis and phonics instruction
10 minutes—vocabulary development
10 minutes—narrative reading and story map

For each literacy skill, the tutor wrote an objective based on a state criteria for the child to achieve. The objective had to give the product the child was to produce by the end of the three hour or weekly lesson in each area; an illustration of this would be a story map of the book read including the title, author, characters and major events and use in retelling the story.

For written expression, the tutee conducted a brief (five minutes) science or math experiment at the beginning of the lesson on day 1 of the week, such as planting a plant. The content areas of science or math were selected for tutors due to their tutees' needs as identified by their teachers in these areas. The tutee wrote a brief "grocery list" type of outline (since they each understood what a grocery list looked like tutees wrote one word spelled the best they could for each step of the experiment) and then through out the writing, the tutor gave instructions by asking questions such as "Where did you put the dirt? What is that called?" "What do you think 'pot' starts with?" "Where will you write that word on your grocery list?" This format of questions continued throughout the week so the student thought throught the entire written report from beginning the experiment and outline to writing the entire report making decisions on each step of the experiment and how to write it. Obviously, the tutoring sessions were very hands-on and involved the child in every step. The instructor asked tutors to sit on their hands if needed but not to pick up a pencil or point to the place—the tutee was to do all of the writing and to keep his/her place when reading or writing. The written expression was given one-half the tutoring time at the beginning of each tutoring session because the writing included using phonics for spelling, writing new vocabulary terms in the report/essay, reading many times what had been written, as well as grammar, punctuation and other skills and knowledge as needed.

For the lesson, the tutor had placed two sets of individual letters of the alphabet in front of the child. The child pronounced words, picked up letters as needed to spell

words throughout the writing assignment. The experiment for the week included steps that contained the one phonic sound to be studied that week such as pl as in plant and planting. Then, the child wrote the new word (new to his ability to read it) in his dictionary (a section of his portfolio that included A-Z tabs and a page for each letter of the alphabet) and wrote or drew a paraphrased meaning of the word. Meanings were not required for most sight words. Afterwards, the child wrote and spelled the new term as s he wrote it onto a poster used for a word wall, then chanted, clapped and spelled the word several times (Cunningham & Allington, 1994).

Obviously, the tutors were working very hard using numerous methods, strategies and materials all involving the tutees' constantly moving hands and mouths while thinking of responses to questions. .And, always, the tutors' eyes were on the clock and aware of the product that needed completing for the children to achieve needed academic skills. Each child produced much work weekly, a written report (brief—several sentences), a story map, studied one sound applied to spelling and pronunciation of new words with that sound, and several new words applied/used in the writing. In addition, the tutees noted their progress on charts (line and bar graphs) keeping careful records of the number of pages read per day and then, setting goals they wanted to achieve the next day.

Following the final assessment and end of tutoring, the tutors wrote summative reports, delivering and explaining them during a final teacher conference and leaving a copy with the principal. The principal and teachers expressed desires for the program to continue with the next semester!

The results

The pre- and post-tutoring assessments are shown in Tables 1-4. For Tables 1-3, the Bader Reading and Language Inventory (1998) was used for oral and silent reading , listening (Table 1), phonics (Table 2) and spelling (Table 3). For Table 4 reporting on written expression, the students used an informal authentic assessment that had been utilized throughout the daily instruction and assessment of writing.

The pre- and post-tutoring assessed results shown in Table one are for the 18 second graders and two fifth graders not for individual students. Thus, only general indications can be formed from the data. Of the seven second graders unable to read orally at preprimer level in pre-tutoring assessment two were still unable to read at that level in the end. Ten passed the first grade level with eight of these measuring second grade in oral reading achievement. One fifth grader increased oral reading test results by two levels from third to fifth and one gained one level from third to fourth . For silent reading, in pretesting, three second graders did not pass the preprimer level but all passed the priprimer level in posttesting. The largest gain at any level or silent reading was at the first grade level where the number went from one to five children achieving instructional level. The highest level in silent that both fifth graders passed in pre-tutoring was primer level and the highest after for both passing was third.. One passed the fourth grade level on both pre- and post-testing. Thus, at least one fifth grader

improved in silent reading skills. For listening, four second graders did not score at preprimer level in pre-tutoring assessment; 17 passed on the post-testing (One student was not tested as that child's tutor's plan did not call for that test to be administered.) Of the 17 post-tested, only the highest level earned was reported (in all other tests, the number that passed at each level was recorded). These indicated that half of the 18 students scored at first grade level which was a gain of 6 students since the pretesting score of seven included 4 students who also passed the second grade level.(In pretesting the seven included the four scoring at second grade and the posttesting first grade score of 9 did not include those scoring at second grade but only those whose highest pass was at first grade level). With post-tutoring assessment, both fifth graders passed the fifth grade listening level whereas only one had in pretesting. Again, at least one fifth grader had increased performance in listening. Thus, both second and fifth graders progressed in oral and silent reading and in listening skill performance on the pre- and post-tutoring assessments. However, the data does not indicate if all individual children progressed as only the group performance of second and fifth graders was recorded.

Table 1

Bader Reading And Language Inventory	Oral Reading Passed Pre	Oral Reading Passed Post	Silent Reading Passed Pre	Silent Reading Passed Post	Listening Passed Pre	Listening Passed Post
Below Preprimer	7	2	3		4	
Preprimer	11 (2)*	16 (2)	15 (2)	18 (2)	14 (2)	2
Primer	4 (2)	11 (2)	7 (2)	8 (2)	12 (2)	2
First	2 (2)	10 (2)	1 (1)	5 (2)	7 (1)	9
Second	1 (1)	8 (2)	(1)	2 (2)	4 (1)	4
Third	1 (2)	5 (2)	1 (1)	1 (2)	(2)	
Fourth		(2)	(1)	(1)	(1)	
Fifth		(1)			(1)	(2)

*All numbers within parentheses refer to the 2 fifth graders in the tutoring program. All other numbers refer to the 18 second graders tutored.

Pretutoring and post tutoring phonics assessments are shown in Table 2. The results indicate a gain of ten-second graders able to recognize all of the initial consonants after tutoring. A gain of three children were able to identify the blends. One of the two fifth graders who had trouble with vowels, did pass all of the vowel recognition test in post-testing. Thus, most of the second graders and at least one of the two fifth graders showed improved results in phonics recognition knowledge

Table 2

Bader Reading and Language Inventory: Phonics	All correct Pre	Post	Did not pass initial consonants Pre	Post
Initial Consonants	5 (2)	15	13	3
Blends	1	4 (2)		
Digraphs		1 (1)		
Vowels	(1)	Short 4 Long 2 (2)		

Spelling test results can best be seen by the number of students scoring 6-10 correct for each list. The lists that each student had is based on the instructional reading level scored on the Bader inventory (Bader, 1998). On the 10 words in List One: Words Spelled Phonetically, Requiring Ability to Hear and Write Sounds (Bader, 1998), the number of second graders scoring 6-10 correct more than doubled from 5 in pretest to 11 in post-testing. An even greater change was found in List Three: Words with Silent Letters, Requiring Visual Memory (Bader, 1998) where the post tutoring score on 6-10 correct was 11 while the pretest was 2! The fifth graders' results were also impressive with both going from 0-5 correct on List 2: Words Spelled Phonetically, Requiring Ability to Hear and Write Sounds (Bader, 1998) to 6-10 correct in post-testing. One fifth grader made much progress on List 4:Words with Silent letters, Requiring Visual Memory (Bader, 1998)) in spelling to score in post-testing where the other fifth grader had scored in pre-testing in the 6-10 correct category. However, neither progress in List Six: Words Illustrating Common Spelling Rules or Conventions (Bader, 1998) beyond 0-5 correct. Most progress for second and fifth graders was noted to be in applying phonics to spelling as well as in spelling with silent letters. Common spelling rules conventions continued to plague the fifth graders.

Table 3

Bader Reading and Language Inventory-Spelling	0-5 correct Before	0-5 correct After	6-10 correct Before	6-10 correct After
List 1	9	6	5	11 (2)
List 2 (5th)	(2)			(2)
List 3	10	5	2	11
List 4	(1)		(1)	(2)
List 6	(2)	(2)		

For the expository written expression results (Table 4) neither second or fifth graders wrote outlines independently before tutoring; however, all but one second grader did after tutoring. Other noted improvements for second graders were writing three separate paragraphs for their reports/essays describing the experiences they had completed for the assessment and writing introductions and including information on the five *wh* questions: *who, what, where, when* and *why* in the introduction . However, they continued to show a need for much work in adding the five *wh* question formation to the body and conclusions of essays/reports. The fifth graders improved in including the five *wh* question formation in the introduction, body and conclusion paragraphs which was an improvement of one of the fifth graders for each paragraph. At least 11 second graders increased the total number of sentences written (those writing 1-2 sentences only in the pre-test) in the expository reports/essays and there may have been others but with group assessment results that cannot be determined. However, all second and fifth graders showed some progress in expository writing beginning with writing outlines.

Table 4

Written expression	2nd graders Before	2nd graders After	5th graders Before	5th graders After
Outline	0	17	0	(2)
Wrote 3 paras.	0	8	(1)	(2)
Introduction	2	16	(2)	(2)
Intro. With 5 wh questions	0	12	(1)	(2)
Body Para.	12	14	(2)	(2)
Body with 5 wh questions	0	3	(0)	(1)
Conclusion Paragraph	0	7	(1)	(2)
Conclusion with 5 wh questions	0	3	(0)	(1)
No. of sentences	1-2 sentences pre post	3-5 sentences pre post	6 + sentences pre post	
Second grade 18 total	12 1	6 10	0 7	
Fifth grade 2 total	0 0	0 0	(2) (2)	

Discussion

Some conclusions can be formed from this limited study of a college's teacher education program's literacy practicum course with 20 tutors who were preservice teachers. They are:

1. According to pre- and post-tutoring assessments tutees improved in:
   --expository writing by increasing the number of sentences written, number of paragraphs written, writing outlines, introductions and bodies and in giving the five *wh* information in the introductions.
   --oral reading assessments showed more success than silent reading and listening but all increased for the group of tutees.
   --recognition of initial consonants.
   --spelling phonetically and spelling with silent letters.

   Students have needs in:

--including conclusions when writing expository reports essays and to include f ive *wh question* information in the body and conclusion of their writing.
--continue to increase oral and silent reading and listening comprehension abilities.
--identifying and using other phonic skills in addition to the initial consonants.
--need to learn and apply spelling rules

2. Tutors used the state's criteria of standards when designing and teaching lessons for tutees.

3. Tutors were tutoring identified at-risk children who had multiple needs in developing literacy skills.

4. Throughout the tutoring, tutors received continuous support of encouragement, instructional help from a supervisor, either the instructor or a classroom teacher, and through communication with peers through regular and impromptu conferences in person and by phone.

5. Tutors received positive results on their teaching by keeping , in a portfolio, the tutee's products from tutoring including progress charts, lesson plans noting what had been completed successfully each week and the summative reports with positive assessment results.

The successful literacy practicum experience has become very demanding of all concerned due to the state standards for all children to achieve and to the increasing numbers of at-risk children in a local public school. However, with close instructor and teacher supervision, weekly conferences with the instructor and with much communication with the tutees' teachers, tutors are accountable for what their tutees are achieving. They interact professinally with school personnel, tutees and with the college instructors by discussing tutees academic needs, planning lessons for skills needed and assessing what the children accomplish. They conducted professional conferences with school personnel on their children and wrote formal summative reports.

Conclusions

Our college's literacy practicum field placement continues to be desirable as principals and school administrators continue to request our tutors for field placements. However, when future preservice teachers enroll in the teacher education program's literacy practicum course, they must be ready for professional responsibility. The school system's and children's needs are too great for tutors who are not ready to make every effort to interact with tutees and teachers on a professional level. They must by ready to be accountable for their tutee's academic accomplishment and to make every effort for their child to achieve. They will be supported by their instructors and teachers who need to be available to them for advise and encouragement. This is needed for the schools to

continue to want preservice teachers placed in their schools and with their children for field experiences.

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